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July 11, 1882.

Mr. Thos. Meehan, Vice-President, in the chair.

Thirteen persons present.

A paper was received for publication, through the Botanical Section of the Academy, entitled "On Rhus cotinoides," by Dr. Chas. Mohr.

July 18, 1882.

Mr. Thos. Meehan, Vice-President, in the chair.

Nine persons present.

Nest of Chætura pelasgia.—Mr. Thomas Meehan exhibited a nest of the chimney-swallow, or swift, from a chimney in Germantown. It was made of small twigs of the cherry-tree, and fastened together, and to the wall of the chimney by vegetable gum of some kind, indeed, pure gum, undistinguishable in taste and general appearance from the kind which exudes from cherry-trees. He referred to the statement of Audubon, and which has apparently been copied without further question by subsequent authors, that the gum used by the bird in the building of its nest is a salivaceous secretion of its own, and that there are within the mouth of the bird, special organs provided for this secretion. Only for this positive statement of Audubon there would be no question, he thought, that this was cherry-gum, obtained at the same time and place from where the twigs were obtained, namely, the cherry-tree. It was not easy to tell one kind of gum from another in the absence of chemical analysis, but he believed there was no difficulty in distinguishing animal gum from the gum yielded by vegetables. It was inconceivable that an animal should secrete vegetable gum. Still, in view of Audubon's statement, the question was one for anatomists to settle.

It was, he said, worthy of remark that other species of swallow used vegetable gum for nest making. A cave-swallow of Cochin China used a gelatinous seaweed, a species of *Gelidium* not far removed from *Chondrus crispus*, the well-known Irish moss, to make their nests. This formed the so-called edible nests of China. Lamaroux, as quoted by Dr. Peyre Porcher, in his "Medical Properties of Cryptogamous Plants," remarks that far inland the birds employed other material to build their nests, but secured some of the *Gelidium* which they employed to stick the materials together, and fasten the nest to its support. The collecting of vegetable gum for this purpose is expressly conceded in the case of this species.

In regard to the nest exhibited, Mr. Meehan called attention to the fact that the gum with which the twigs were coated, had evidently all been deposited on the wall before the collection of the twigs; and, as the twigs were placed, the gum was softened perhaps by saliva, or perhaps by water brought in the bird's bill, so that it could be drawn over the twigs. This was evident by the lines of gummy threads, which mostly started from the mass on the wall, and decreased in thickness as they were drawn out, terminating in filmy lines. He called attention to the nest exhibited as being obliquely built, and not set regularly against the face of the wall. That this appeared to be intentional seemed evident from the fact that the finer ends of the twigs all started from right to left and which, after being fastened there by the gum, were bent around to the left, making a greater curve at the right, on account of the less resistance from the slender end of the twigs. This obliquity seemed a great advantage to the bird, as it provides for sitting nearly parallel with the wall. If the bird sat at right angles with the wall, its long wings would be very much in the way of her work.

Miss **Grace Anna Lewis** remarked that she had once had an opportunity of seeing a chimney-bird at work repairing the nest upon which it was sitting. The bird adjusted a loose stick with ease, and then plastered it with its bill, using the latter in the manner of a trowel. It then waited quietly, apparently to give time for a further secretion, and worked and rested alternately, until the damage was repaired. All this was distinctly seen through a pipe hole opposite the nest of the bird.

Miss Lewis had seen many nests of the chimney-bird and did not think they were usually larger on one side than the other, but supposed that the specimen shown by Mr. Meehan, had been warped by rain, and redrying.

When first built, the nests are quite symmetrical, and in the form of a quarter of a globe. The particular nest to which she referred had been built by placing two sticks vertically, and attaching the cross-pieces to these, to form the open basket-work. She thought the cement used to fasten the sticks was of animal origin and was derived from the bird itself. When fresh and unsmoked, the cement does not resemble even in color, the gum of the cherry-tree.

July 25, 1882.

Mr. **Thos. Meehan**, Vice-President, in the chair.

Eight persons present.

Dr. Maxwell T. Masters, of London, was elected a correspondent.

The following was ordered to be printed:—